Americans for Balanced Energy Choices Research Identifies Benefits of New Coal-Fueled Power Plant Construction

ABEC press release (Januuary 10)

Research conducted by Americans for Balanced Energy Choices (ABEC) contradicts recent claims by critics that coal-fueled power plant construction has died. In addition, the research identified substantial benefits, including economical and environmental returns, resulting from the construction of several new coal-fueled power plants nationwide. Currently, there are more than 120 coal-fueled power plants currently under or near construction, permitted or in the early stages of development. The US EIA projects the need for an average of 6,000 megawatts (MW) per year through 2030.

The breakdown of new plants according to status and capacity is:

-- Currently under construction: 24 (capacity 12,506 MW)

-- Near construction: 8 (capacity 4,565 MW)

-- Permitted: 13 (capacity 23,240 MW)

-- Announced: 76 (48, 440 MW)

According to the US Energy Information Association (EIA), electricity demand nationwide will nearly double in the next 20 years. With a 250-year supply of coal, the United States is in a position to leverage its most abundant domestic resource to provide secure, affordable energy, said Joe Lucas, ABEC executive director.

Lucas clearly admits that there have been some high profile coal projects that have either been delayed or cancelled. But the research shows there are many more projects that have been approved and under construction than have been cancelled, said Lucas.

Lucas acknowledged that a lot can happen between when a project is announced and a permit is issued and a project begins construction. But, in order to get a full appreciation of coals near- term future, you have to focus as much on what is being built rather just looking at instances where coal projects are in trouble, said Lucas. Construction of these new coal-fueled plants will not only make it possible to meet this growing electricity demand, but help further the development and deployment of technology that increases plant efficiencies and reduces emissions. During the past 35 years, the use of coal in the U.S. has nearly tripled, at the same time, air quality improved and emissions from coal-based electricity are 33 percent lower despite this increased use, Lucas said.

Lucas also said the research is more than just a running total of what is being built versus projects that have died. It also identifies technology deployment and economic impact. Every plant listed as under or near construction or permitted has proposed deploying technology including subcritical and supercritical pulverized coal (PC) technology, clean

coal fluidized bed technology (CFB) or integrated gasification and combined cycle (IGCC) technology. Research indicates that coal, in addition to providing affordable electricity, plays an important role in other areas of a states economy. According to research, US coal-fueled electricity contributes $1.05 trillion in gross economic output, $362 billion in annual household incomes and 6.8 million jobs in 2015. As a result, halted or deferred plant development may result in insufficient electricity capacity growth, which would affect a states economic output, household income and job growth.

Not only does coal provide a constant, reliable flow of base load power, but its transmission capabilities can help further diversify a states energy portfolio. Many wind-generating power sites lack transmission lines needed to send the power to its customers. The construction of new coal-fueled plants can help further advance wind power by providing much needed transmission capabilities wind power generating sites currently lack, Lucas said.

The following is a list of coal-fueled plants currently under construction, its location and initial opening year:

-- Black Hills Wygen plant, Gillette, WY, 2008

-- Arkansas River Power Lamar plant, Lamar, CO, 2008

-- WPS Resources Weston plant, Rothschild, WI, 2008

-- Newmont Mining TS Power plant, Dunphy, NV, 2008

-- Santee Cooper Cross plant, Cross, SC, 2009

-- East Kentucky Power Spurlock plant, Maysville, KY, 2009

-- Omaha Public Power Nebraska City plant, Nebraska City, NE, 2009

-- Wisconsin Energy Elm Road plant, Milwaukee, WI, 2009

-- TXU Sandow Repower plant, Milam County, TX, 2009

-- San Antonio Spruce plant, San Antonio, TX, 2009

-- TXU Oak Grove plant, Franklin, TX, 2009

-- Salt River Power Springerville plant, Springerville, AZ, 2009

-- Springfield, IL Dallman plant, Lake Springfield, IL, 2010

-- Springfield, MO Southwest plant, Springfield, MO, 2010

-- LG&E Energy Trimble County plant, Trimble County, KY, 2010

-- Kansas City P&L Iatan plant, Weston, MO, 2010

-- LS Power Plum Point plant, Osceola, AR, 2010

-- GenPower/First Reserve Longview plant, Monongalia County, WV, 2011